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TAGS: [EAGR](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AR](#)  
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: AMBASSADOR WAYNE AND MINISTER OF  
INTERIOR DISCUSS AGRICULTURAL STRIKES

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 386

[1](#)B. BUENOS AIRES 379  
[1](#)C. BUENOS AIRES 368  
[1](#)D. BUENOS AIRES 328

Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On March 26, Ambassador met with Argentina's new Interior Minister, Florencio Randazzo. The Minister spoke at some length about the ongoing rural sector strikes (reftels), stating that this is the most difficult time that either Kirchner has faced, but is an opportunity for both the President and Argentina. Ambassador expressed support for Ambassador Swing's candidacy for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Director Generalship and raised in more detail bilateral cooperation on migration issues and Trafficking in Persons. He also noted the GOA's campaign to reduce traffic accidents. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Background: The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) covers the politics, governance, and security of the interior, as well as jurisdictional issues between the federal government, provinces, and city of Buenos Aires. New Minister Florencio Randazzo presides over a significantly reduced portfolio since former MOI Anibal Fernandez took the majority of internal security responsibilities, including counter-narcotics and airport security, with him to his new post at the Ministry of Justice, but he is the government's key liason with provincial and state officials.

Ambassador Swing, migration, and bilateral cooperation  
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[1](#)3. (SBU) Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the Minister meeting on March 31 with the USG candidate for Director General of the IOM. He outlined Ambassador Swing's extensive breadth of international experience as a six-time Ambassador, including service in extremely challenging environments such as the Congo, Haiti, Nigeria, and Liberia. Ambassador Wayne also noted the recent meeting between Ministry of the Interior (MOI) and Embassy's ICE Office, which promises close future bilateral cooperation on migration issues such as trafficking in persons. The Minister concurred, and the Ambassador followed by asking if there were any other issues in the MOI portfolio where Post could be of assistance. Randazzo thanked Ambassador Wayne and said that he looked forward to continued discussions and cooperation.

Road Safety  
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[1](#)4. (SBU) Under Randazzo the MOI has begun initiatives to reduce the number of traffic accidents and fatalities, which are on the rise in Argentina due to increased car ownership and trucking activity (and the average Argentine driver's

propensity to try and emulate five-time Formula One champion Juan Manuel Fangio). The Ambassador noted that this is a key safety issue, and inquired about the Minister's recent highway safety initiatives. Randazzo confirmed that they successfully reduced the number of accidents over the Semana Santa holiday. The Minister also mentioned that Argentine driving habits reflect a cultural distaste for laws that exists in the country and make traffic safety a challenging issue to address as well as many other issues such as tax collection.

#### Rural Sector Crisis

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15. (C) On the subject of the ongoing farm sector strikes (reftels), Randazzo stated his belief that the recent increase in export taxes was necessary and justified. The old system was a holdover from the Menem Administration and needed to be changed given the rapid increases in land value, commodity prices, and sector profitability over the past few years. Further, such redistribution was critical to keeping inflation low. Regarding the spontaneous protests occurring in Buenos Aires and other urban areas in support of the farmers, he said he believed these citizens are doing so based more on other grievances against the GOA rather than in particular solidarity with farmers' complaints. The Ambassador said that, if this is true and when combined with strikes in the provinces, it may reflect that citizens have few legitimate fora or channels, such as a well-organized opposition, to air grievances and discuss policy. In the U.S. numerous outlets exist that are largely absent in Argentina. The Minister agreed that this notion had some merit. In the end, he affirmed that it is critical the GOA negotiate with the opposition, "which is a critical element of a functioning democracy such as ours," and reach a solution that "harmonizes the interests of all sectors."

16. (C) Comment: Despite Randazzo now presiding over a significantly reduced portfolio, he appears to be an open interlocutor interested in engagement with the USG. He is noted for maintaining good relations with the province of Buenos Aires and with the Kirchners, and his political career has always been connected to the PJ. As such, he could prove to be a useful contact on TIP issues in particular, and migration-related issues in general. His open analysis of the ongoing farm sector strike was notable, as was his opinion -- contrary to the public stance at the time of his President -- that the situation required negotiation. Later in the day however, in public radio and television interviews, he closely toed the Administration line, saying that the GOA would only negotiate once the lockouts had ended.

WAYNE